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**An Internship Experience in
Educational Leadership in
the Pitman School District**

**by
Eileen P. Roberts**

A Masters Thesis

**Submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree in The Graduate School of
Rowan University
April, 1998**

Approved by

Professor

Date Approved April 15, 1998

Abstract

Eileen P. Roberts

An Internship Experience in
Educational Leadership in the
Pitman School District
1997-98
Dr. Theodore Johnson
School Business Administration

The purpose of this project was to study the observation instrument and job description of an instructional aide, evaluating each for its relevancy and updating where necessary. Instructional aides and administrators were inserviced to ensure everyone's understanding of job expectations and indicators for evaluation. Classroom instruction would be enhanced by achieving uniformity in evaluation and knowing the value of the job.

All twelve instructional aides completed a survey and were interviewed, answering questions about the responsibilities of his/her job. Through this process, the intern determined the need for a revised job description and evaluation instrument. Samples of job descriptions and observation forms were obtained from six neighboring school districts. After careful review of these forms as well as survey and interview data, the intern devised a new instructional aide job description and observation tool.

The intern developed leadership qualities while working with administrators and instructional aides on this project. It was important to hear their comments, understand the problem, and negotiate to reach a compromise that both parties could be happy with. These are important leadership qualities for administrators.

Mini-Abstract

Eileen P. Roberts

An Internship Experience in
Educational Leadership in the
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Dr. Theodore Johnson
School Business Administration

This project focused on analyzing the current job description and evaluation instrument for instructional aides. This resulted in the development of a new job description and observation tool as well as the inservicing of administrators and aides to ensure understanding of job expectations and indicators for evaluation.

Acknowledgments

There are many people who made this experience possible and meaningful for me. I would like to thank my husband Fred, and sons Dick and Neil, for sacrifices they willingly made so that I would be able to accomplish my goals. There were events missed, nights without supper, preoccupied moments, and times when I was just plain miserable to be around. We survived and now will be able to spend more quality time together.

I would also like to thank my parents, Sam and Ruth Powell. They have always been supportive and there for me whenever I've needed them. They have instilled values in me that have helped me realize my dreams.

There are many colleagues at Pitman Middle School who have encouraged me throughout this whole process. They provided an ear to listen, a shoulder to cry on, and the advice and encouragement that I have needed. Their friendship and support has meant a great deal to me.

Throughout the three years I have been working on my graduate program, there have been many people who have helped me in some way. Specifically, I would like to thank . . .

. . . Charlotte Shinkle, my friend. Words aren't adequate enough to thank her. Through typing, I know she has read more of my work than she has cared to. Yet she has always been so willing to give of her time and talents to help me through each revision involved

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Michele Roemer and Mike DiPaola exemplify the positive characteristics of administrators that I have studied throughout my graduate work. I thank them both for all the times they were willing to talk and listen. I hope one day to be as effective in a leadership role as they are. Each is an excellent role model and I consider myself very fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with and learn from them.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Focus of the Study

Problem Statement

Currently in the Pitman School System, there is no consistency in the observation of instructional aides. There is an observational tool for instructional aides, however many have never seen the form nor had any evaluation; formal or informal, of the work they do. This tends to foster a feeling of unimportance for aides and their work.

Through this project, the job description of an instructional aide will be evaluated for its relevancy and updated if necessary. Job descriptions will be gathered from neighboring districts for comparison. After meeting with instructional aides to review required duties, they will be surveyed for input regarding indicators for assessment to be used on an observational tool. Upon completion of the job evaluation form, all instructional aides as well as all administrators who will be doing the evaluating will be inserviced as to the indicators that will be used to evaluate their job performance.

As a result of this project, all instructional aides will know the indicators for evaluation of their job performance and will be evaluated in a classroom setting. Knowing job expectations will show instructional aides the value of their job and encourage them to meet the standards. This will enhance classroom instruction.

Definitions

The following definitions and terms are an integral part of this study:

instructional aide - a person who assists special education students in the classroom setting; need only have a high school diploma.

media aide - person who assists and is responsible to the high school media center specialist; need only have a high school diploma.

IEP - individualized educational program; program formulated for each special education child.

special education child - child who has been classified as having a special need.

BSIP - basic skills instructional program; student who has scored, on standardized testing, below state cut off.

in-class support resource center- special education student in regular education classroom with support and modification from special education teacher.

in-class replacement resource center - more academically limited special education student as part of the holistic regular education curriculum, but leaves the classroom to be taught basic educational skills by the special education teacher.

Limitations of the Study

The uniqueness of duties of each instructional aide employed in the district is a limitation of this study. Although there is a standard basic job description for an instructional aide, the actual tasks required of each aide varies greatly as dictated by the individual educational program of each special education child being serviced by that particular aide.

This would also be a limitation in trying to develop a standard for evaluation

when the particular duties of each aide can vary so greatly. It is not desirable to have different observational standards or tools for each aide.

A serious limitation of this study is that much of the gathered information gets filtered through the perceptions of the director. Varied background experiences, academic preparation, and assessment capabilities can influence the data collected.

Setting of the Study

Pitman is a residential community of 2.3 square miles with a population of about 10,000 people and is situated in Gloucester County, New Jersey. The population is 98% white with 22% of persons over the age of 18 having a college degree, while 48% of that same age group have at least some college education. Less than 5% of the population lives in poverty with the median family income (1989) being \$44,244.

Approximately 1800 students are enrolled in this K-12 district. The tradition of quality education is maintained through neighborhood elementary schools, a middle and high school, each located within student walking distance.

Pitman is enhanced by residents who are actively involved in their community and committed to their schools. The community believes that the primary purpose of school is to support the personal growth of students in the development of attitudes, knowledge, and skills. The most important skills to be taught are how to think and how to learn. This means that the emphasis of education is on helping students to reason independently and using criteria to think critically so they can acquire competence at

intellectual skills that grow with every passing year. This also means the aim of education is to teach students to make intelligent choices in all areas of their lives.

A Library/Media Center supports the educational program in every school. The middle and high schools boast high tech media centers with a diversified collection of both print and non-print resources.

Computers are tools of the curriculum in all classrooms K-12 with specific computer science courses in the middle school and high school. These courses include information processing, computer-aided drafting and design, and programming in different computer languages.

The professional staff of the school district consists of approximately 168 staff members, over 35 of whom have earned advanced degrees. The average experience of the teaching staff is 15 years.

The Pitman school district is very proud of the accomplishments of the students. Student scores on the New Jersey High School Proficiency Tests are the best in Southern New Jersey. Approximately 80% of graduates continue their education at institutions of higher learning.

For the third time in the last five years Pitman's schools have been recognized in the annual "School Issue" of New Jersey Monthly magazine. The September 1997 edition's feature article opens with the statement: *"Pitman Borough, a school district in Gloucester County, spends less educating students than almost every other district in the state does."* (DeMonte, 1997, pg.46). The article attempts to answer the questions of how Pitman managed to do so well academically while spending just a fraction of what other

districts spend.

The authors analyzed school district spending and student achievement as measures of a school district's efficiency and effectiveness. They considered variables including total comparative cost per pupil, percentage of students passing the HSPT, average SAT scores, District Factor Group, and faculty attendance rates. The independent comparison ranked Pitman among the top three districts in the entire state that spend a little yet get a lot academically.

The research revealed five district traits that Pitman shares with many of the most successful school districts. The first trait is that these schools are located in communities where taxpayers put a premium on thriftiness. The second characteristic is that these districts have high standards for students, faculty, and staff. Efficient and effective districts are found to be demanding of everyone. The third trait is an ongoing program of comprehensive training of faculty and staff. The best way to ensure high standards in a school is to be certain that the faculty and staff are prepared to do their jobs.

Another trait of effective and efficient districts is a willingness to experiment with cost-effective programs. Cooperative purchasing of goods is just one strategy to keep the overall operating budget comparatively low, enabling the directing of resources to actual classroom instruction. The final characteristic is a commitment to parent and community involvement. The district is not only available to parents and taxpayers to discuss school issues, but residents are involved in school issues.

Pitman was involved in a strategic planning process during the 1995/96 school

year. The process provided an opportunity for the community to clearly define what it wants from the school district and more specifically, how the district can accomplish these goals. The process continues with annual meetings to update the community. This is believed to be a major contributing factor to the success of Pitman Schools.

Importance of the Study

The lack of consistency and relevancy in the observation format for instructional aides prevents uniformity in assessing the effectiveness of aides in their diverse roles. A better understanding of job expectations coupled with goal setting will better enable the aide to understand his/her value in the classroom situation. As a result of this study, classroom instruction will be enhanced as aides have a better understanding of the value and expectations of his/her role.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 2 will reflect the literature search. It will include the evaluation and synthesizing of information on the evaluation of instructional aides. It will also include inferences drawn between similar areas, such as research on evaluation of teachers.

Chapter 3 will include the technicalities of data collection, a general description of the research design. The study will include a collection of job descriptions as well as current evaluation instruments being used in neighboring districts. This information will be used as a resource in developing relevant job descriptions and a formal observation tool for instructional aides in the school district of Pitman. Current instructional aides will also be surveyed for their input regarding present methods of observation and

evaluation. Present job descriptions will also be evaluated and compared to actual responsibilities of aides.

Chapter 4 will include the presentation of the research as well as my evaluation of what this data means. Using this information, new job descriptions as well as an observation/evaluation tool will be formulated. All instructional aides to be evaluated as well as all administrators who will be doing the evaluating will also be inserviced by me regarding the research findings and new observation indicators.

Chapter 5 will include the conclusions of the study. In this chapter, I will reflect on my leadership development as well as changes brought about in the organization. I will accompany an administrator on an aide observation and subsequent conference to ensure mutual understanding of all indicators and to ascertain if there is a need for further study. The successful completion of this project will ultimately enhance classroom instruction for students involved.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Any well-structured organization has predetermined patterns for the evaluation of all staff members. Whether evaluation takes the form of interviews, rating sheets, tests, or a combination of several of these, it must be done on a periodic and established basis (Candoli, Hack, Ray, 1995). Staff evaluations should be cooperative efforts with the goal being to determine areas of strength to be built upon while improving areas of weakness.

Uniformity is the big problem in Pitman for instructional aides. Although there is only one instructional aide job description for the district, there is not a standard or uniformity in job responsibilities. There are also inconsistencies regarding job evaluation ranging from no observation whatsoever, to a very formal observation.

Well written job descriptions are indispensable tools for effective school administration of personnel management systems. All of the many decisions made by school managers and supervisors either influence or are influenced by determinations about how work is divided into jobs and about how jobs are to be accomplished (National School Boards Association, 1987).

A job description and evaluation is the basic resource for planning the ways and means by which a job will be done. It allows for easy translation of a school system's organizational goals into the assignment of specific responsibilities to individuals jobs.

A job description and evaluation is also the basic resource for controlling operations to ensure that each job is done efficiently. It also furnishes standards for compiling meaningful job statements and for providing a basis for compensation schedules. The job description is the basic resource for selecting and developing the person who will do a job. Job descriptions set standards that extend from the original interview to final separation.

Under New Jersey's Administrative Code, job descriptions must be developed for all teaching staff positions and used as a part of the criteria for evaluation. The code also requires written job descriptions and standards for appointment for all paraprofessional positions who assist in the supervision of pupil activities under the direction of designated certified professional personnel. Although not required in statute or code, it is good practice to have job descriptions for all noncertified staff (Petracco, 1993).

Job descriptions of a district should adhere to a standard format. A good job description should include the following:

- * job title specified;
- * necessary qualifications delineated;
- * goal of the position established;
- * defined lines of communication and authority;
- * essential performance and responsibilities outlined;
- * terms of employment stated;
- * evaluation of criteria statement provided; and

*creative and subsequent revisions indicated (King, 1992).

A job description is the blueprint or guide for work to be accomplished. It is intended to meet the needs of both the staff member, who is to do the work, and management, which must see that the work gets done (King, 1992). A good description presents an accurate job picture that is understandable and meaningful to the job holder, supervisor, and other informed persons both within and outside the school system. A good job description must be up-to-date, and remains valid regardless of who holds the job (Petracco, 1993). The best test of the quality of job descriptions is whether they function to improve personnel management. If poorly done, they are filed and forgotten; but, if done well and created with the full involvement of employees, they are an active tool serving many uses (Candoli, Hack, Ray, 1995).

Job descriptions should be evaluated to ensure that they don't become straitjackets. Jobs are dynamic. Needs change. New people may bring talents to a job that can and should change the nature of a given job. Their inventiveness should not be held back because of a few words written on a piece of paper. A job description should never be permitted to inhibit change or the desire to give a better service to school clients. It is imperative to change and update job descriptions (National School Boards Association, 1987).

In developing an evaluation model, several steps need to be kept in mind. Program needs must first be identified and then program expectations must be correlated with job responsibilities. When performance indicators have been selected, standards may be set for job performance and for documenting same (Stronge, 1990).

One of the best ways to establish an evaluation policy is to provide within the policy for some degree of self-evaluation (King, 1992). Proper emphasis also needs to be placed on the central activity of the staff member's job description. To place too much importance on an area that is not clearly defined or understood by the employee is not only unfair, but also damaging to employee-employer relationships. Any evaluation method needs to mirror the activities detailed in the job description. The total evaluation effort should be viewed as a constructive effort toward the improvement of the performance of the particular staff member and toward the betterment of the supervisory process (Stronge, 1990).

This model that Stronge refers to is the Professional/Support Personnel Model. Included in this model is an identification of system needs as the first step. Once identified, specific duties need to be delineated with performance indicators and standards selected and set. When established, job performance must be evaluated and documented in order to improve and maintain professional service. This model establishes a systematic evaluation method that builds on the commonalities of the various educational speciality areas while recognizing the distinctiveness of each. A good evaluation system has jointly developed criteria and procedures as well as a purpose that promotes professional development and the use of multiple data sources (Tucker, 1995).

It is important that the net result of an evaluation system is professional growth and the improvement of classroom instruction (Helm, 1992). It is important to emphasize goal and improvement orientations. Meaningful goal setting with the teacher and cooperating instructional aide as well as administration addresses the important

concept of a common vision. A planning/goal setting conference at the beginning of the year is an important component of a growth-oriented evaluation system. This promotes a mutually productive post conference where student assessment and evaluation data can be interpreted and evaluated as well as provide for a time for self-assessment (Helm, 1992).

Special education is changing rapidly and will continue to evolve over the ensuing months. The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which was reauthorized this past June, will require major changes in how some school districts meet the needs of disabled youngsters (DeBleu, 1997).

School districts will be pressed to include more classified, disabled students in regular education classes. Parents will also be more involved in the decision-making process of these children's special education programs. Support staff and increased staff training will need to be provided to facilitate successful individual educational programs (IEP).

While federal laws are calling for placing special education students in the least restrictive environment, NJEA notes that the placement should be the appropriate least restrictive environment, reflective of the student's needs (Yakopcic, 1997).

In 1992, NJEA's policy-making Delegate Assembly passed principles regarding a least restrictive environment for an inclusive educational option. Among these principles was a stress for support services for these students. Support services not only includes adequate special education teachers, but also adequate numbers of instructional aides. The principles also stressed the need for staff development for all involved if staff is to

successfully make a transition from the current system to a revised model (Yakopcic, 1997).

School districts need to provide skill training for classroom teachers and support personnel that focuses on responding to special-needs students, beginning with behavioral challenges (Davis, 1995). A district should also provide skill training in collaboration and communication, initiate team-building activities in each school, and begin discussions of issues central to cooperation between regular education and special education.

With these current educational trends of including special education students in regular education classes as much as possible, it is important that proper support be provided for these students. According to the student's IEP (individual educational program), a child may be placed in a regular education classroom with the support of only an instructional aide. This instructional aide may not modify the student's program, but may provide the support necessary to ensure his/her success. The job of the instructional aide has taken on a new importance. Delineated responsibilities in an updated job description not only clarifies what is expected, but also makes clear the importance of this position and the contribution to the whole educational process.

Evaluation taking the form of a goal-setting pre-conference, staff development, classroom observation, and an evaluative post-conference not only encourages aides to meet the required standards, but also makes a commitment toward professional growth and enhancing classroom instruction.

Job descriptions and goal-setting sessions form a framework for professional

practice. A framework for professional practice can be used for a wide range of purposes, from meeting novices' needs to enhancing veterans' skills (Danielson, 1996). Because the teaching profession is complex, it is helpful to have a road map through the territory, structured around a shared understanding. Novices in the profession are concerned with day-to-day survival, while the more experienced strive to improve their effectiveness and help their colleagues to do so as well.

The traditional motivational rule--"*What gets rewarded gets done*" --has its place, but by itself it is neither powerful nor expansive enough to provide the kind of motivational climate needed in schools. One alternative to this rule is "*what is rewarding gets done.*" The work gets done, and it gets done without close supervision or other controls. The sources of motivation are embedded in the work itself (Sergiovanni, 1992).

A criterion of a profession is that its practitioners never stop learning better ways of providing service for their clients. Continuous examination and modification of practice is essential to professional growth (Joyce, 1990).

There is a widespread agreement that collegiality in the teaching profession is an important ingredient for promoting better working conditions, improving teaching practice, and getting better results. Collegiality is an important key to the conception of the school as a community of learners (Barth, 1990).

With these thoughts in mind, a school district should be cognizant of the message sent to instructional aides. A current updated job description is imperative to stress the importance of the job expected and the aides' role in enhancing classroom instruction. The school schedule must be arranged to encourage rather than impede opportunities for

teachers and instructional aides to interact in goal-setting conferences as well as sessions that promote professional growth.

CHAPTER 3

Design of the Study

General Description of Research Design

Evaluation is an issue which intrinsically affects each staff member. As a positive tool, evaluation can aid teaching staff as well as instructional aides when they need guidance as well as convey a message of recognition for a job well done. Negatively, evaluation can be used to threaten employees and their livelihoods.

The research plan determined the need for not only instructional aides knowing the indicators for evaluation of their job performance, but also pointed out the need for inservicing of administrators on this issue. The plan also delineated the need for a total remodeling of the position, including the job description.

I held two meetings with the twelve instructional aides currently employed in the school district. The first meeting was an information gathering session. Here, we had a chance to informally talk about the specifics of the job they do and exactly what they perceived their roles to be. At this point, I realized that all instructional aides did in fact not know the indicators for evaluation of their performance and that only two of the twelve instructional aides were formally observed last year. The remainder of the aides believed that administrators noticed the job they were doing when visiting in the room to formally observe the classroom teacher, however each had no proof of that. As a result of

this initial meeting, I designed a survey (see Appendix A) and met again and gathered data from instructional aides.

Description of Development and Design of Research Instruments

The purpose of this project was to ensure that all instructional aides knew the indicators for the evaluation of their job performance and, in fact to be evaluated in a classroom setting. The thought was that if instructional aides were aware of job expectations, they would understand the value of their job and be encouraged to meet standards. The obvious benefit to this is an enhancement of classroom instruction. This meeting with instructional aides proved to me the need for not only inservicing of the aides on the indicators for job evaluation, but also the need for a meeting with administrators on this same issue. As indicated by the instructional aides, only two were formally observed and evaluated by an administrator. Although other instructional aides believed that their work was noted when an administrator was in the classroom for another reason, there was in fact no formal documented evidence for this matter.

Having listened to the instructional aides, I realized that they did not have an understanding for the importance of the work they do. They also did not feel appreciated or valued by administration. This was evidenced as they spoke of their various duties. Duties ranged from actual contact with students where assistance was given to check-in at a front lobby table to several periods of lunch duty. A person hired as an instructional aide obviously felt little importance in this position when so many other non-instructional tasks were added to their day.

This meeting with the instructional aides proved to provide a wealth of knowledge on the history of instructional aides in this district. It was also helpful for instructional aides to have that time to communicate their responsibilities and their concerns to each other. One aide informed me that she has worked in this district for seventeen years and that this was the first meeting ever for them to meet as a group and discuss their job responsibilities and evaluation.

Description of the Sample and Sampling Technique

The sampling technique was to survey all twelve instructional aides who work in four of the five schools in the district. The distribution is as follows: one instructional aide for the high school; three instructional aides for the Middle School; five instructional aides for the Memorial School; and three instructional aides for Walls School. The Memorial School is an elementary school that houses many of the special needs students for the district. Included in Memorial School is a Communications Handicapped Primary (CHP) as well as a Multiply Handicapped Primary (MHP) and a Perceptually Impaired Primary (PIP) class. There is also a Resource Center in Memorial School. These classes, because of type handicap and numbers serviced, have each required an instructional aide. The Walls School also houses a Perceptually Impaired Primary (PIP) and a Perceptually Impaired Intermediate (PII) class as well as one and one half Resource Centers. These also require instructional aides. The district's other elementary school, Kindle School, houses only one Resource Center with a full-time teacher who works as an inclusion teacher in various classes. Instructional aides are not needed in this setting. Instructional

aides at the Middle School and High School assist special education students with Resource Center teachers and classroom teachers according to student's IEP (Individual Educational Program).

Description of Data Collection Approach

An important data collection approach used in this project was the survey. The purpose of the survey was two-fold. Instructional aides answered seven questions. The questions focused on the current evaluation form (see Appendix B). Aides were first asked if they were evaluated and if the evaluation tool presented was the one used. Instructional aides were then surveyed for their evaluation of and comments on the specific observation tool. Specific survey questions were asked to determine the relevancy of the evaluation tool and specific comments for improvement were solicited. Consultation with instructional aides in both the development and implementation phases of evaluation was very important.

Besides this analysis of the current observation/evaluation tool, all instructional aides were surveyed and asked to outline a typical day. Included in this part of the survey were specific duties and responsibilities for each aide in each building on a day to day basis. Verbal information gathered at the initial meeting through interviewing the instructional aides was also a part of the data collection approach.

I also telephoned a number of neighboring school districts requesting a copy of their instructional aide job description as well as a copy of the evaluation instrument used for instructional aides. Information was gathered from the following school districts: Glassboro, Mantua Township, Woodbury, Deptford Township, Washington Township,

and Clearview Regional.

Description of Data Analysis Plan

The results of this survey were surprising to me and not what I would want as a future administrator. To ensure accurate analysis of all this gathered data, I met with the Superintendent of Schools and the School Business Administrator for an afternoon and reviewed each instructional aide survey response. Careful consideration was given to each instructional aide outline of his or her typical day. After much discussion and evaluation of each survey, my conclusions were substantiated. Not only was a new observation/evaluation instrument needed as well as an inservicing of all instructional aides and administrators regarding its use, but of equal importance was a need for a total reworking of the instructional aide job description.

Good, fair job descriptions are an integral part of the evaluation process. Persons being evaluated must know what is expected of them and the persons doing the evaluation must be familiar with these duties. According to the New Jersey Administrative Code, job description means, in part, a written specification of the function of the position, duties, and responsibilities. Job descriptions must also be realistic. It is an impractical task to try and develop an individualized one for each instructional aide in the district. Although particular duties may vary from classroom to classroom, general classroom responsibilities apply and need to be formulated. Instructional aides believe in a sound, fair evaluation process and want to be told what kind of job they are doing. They also want that evaluation to be a fair and honest appraisal of what they are called upon to do.

The data furnished from neighboring districts was reviewed. After careful study of information gathered, I met with the Superintendent of Schools to review my analysis of all the data presented. My newly developed instructional aide job description (see Appendix C) had some major changes from the job description currently used. After explaining my reasoning to the Superintendent, using my research data to support my position for the need for change, he agreed with my newly developed instructional aide job description.

The evaluation instrument was also revised, implementing a number of the suggested changes received from instructional aides in the survey (see Appendix D). Information was also included using the data obtained from neighboring school districts. Special attention was given to all comments and suggestions made by our own instructional aides in the survey conducted.

With a newly developed job description and observation/evaluation instrument formulated by me using data gathered from our twelve instructional aides as well as data gathered from six neighboring districts, I met again with all instructional aides. The purpose of this meeting was to share the outcome of my research and to be sure that I had not misrepresented any survey comments made by instructional aides. Input was again solicited from instructional aides. The dual purpose for this meeting was to take the time to inservice all instructional aides on each indicator used for evaluation. Time was taken to answer all questions, ensuring understanding.

I met next with our Superintendent and School Business Administrator. The

purpose of this meeting was to seek final approval. This was accomplished by reviewing both documents carefully, ensuring that they both were in fact in keeping with the district's goals and philosophy.

Inservicing of principals, administrators who would be doing the observing and evaluating, followed at a special meeting called for this purpose. Principals were given copies of the new job description and observation/evaluation tool. Each indicator for evaluation was reviewed. All questions were addressed. Understanding of the observation tool was substantiated by my accompanying several administrators on an instructional aide evaluation/observation. My monitoring of the post-evaluation conference confirmed administrative understanding of all indicators addressed in the observation instrument.

This uniform, relevant job description and observation/evaluation tool has paved the way to positive and collaborative approaches to staff evaluation. These approaches are characterized by such terms as trust, cooperation, planning, and improvement. These guidelines are intended to improve the learning experiences of students. This can be achieved when we work together to use the evaluation as a positive force in the district. A good evaluation system will not only identify and remedy deficiencies, but will identify exemplary performances and good practices. All parties must support these positive approaches if the benefits of evaluation are to be realized.

CHAPTER 4

Presentation of the Research Findings

What Information Was Found

Valuable information was found through the use of an instructional aide survey and interviews with aides. A meeting was held with the aides to discuss the tool used in their evaluation. Each one was given the opportunity to answer a seven question survey as well as provide a narrative, outlining a typical day. Each aide was also given a copy of the current evaluation form and was asked to comment on any aspect.

The first question was: *To the best of your knowledge, is the current observation form used annually in your building for all instructional and library aides?* Forms were distributed to twelve instructional aides and five library aides. Eleven of the twelve instructional aides said that the form was in fact used. One had never seen the form before and had no knowledge of it being used. Two library aides had been observed using the form. The other three were not at all familiar with the form.

The second survey question was: *Are you observed in a classroom setting or is the observation form merely filled out and given to you to sign?* In response to this question, the two library aides who were familiar with the evaluation form had merely been asked to sign it when it was completed. Neither one was formally observed.

Of the eleven instructional aides familiar with the evaluation instrument, three had

actually been notified prior to the observation and requested to inform the supervisor of a good time to see them "in action". The remaining eight aides were under the impression that their work had been noted both during the formal classroom teacher observation time as well as during the many visits a principal makes to a classroom. None of these aides, however, was called in for an observation conference. Each was merely asked to sign the evaluation form at the end of the school year.

The third survey question was: *If you are not formally observed, do you feel that would be more beneficial?* All instructional and library aides expressed a desire to be formally observed. Each one believed that an observation/evaluation form that was tailored to the job they do would help them to be more effective. Each instructional aide also expressed a desire to be evaluated by the classroom teacher. The aides believed that the cooperating classroom teacher would be more valuable as an evaluator as the teacher observes their performance on a daily basis as opposed to the one formal observation by the building principal.

The fourth survey question was: *In your opinion, is the current observation form a good representation of the work you do? Explain.* All library aides felt that the current aide observation report had many characteristics that had nothing to do with the job they do daily. Their consensus was that the job of a library aide is very different from the job of an instructional aide and cannot effectively be evaluated using the same form.

Instructional aides all wanted changes made to the current observation instrument. Although the "additional comments" section allows for a more specific narrative, all aides generally felt that the observation form was too general, not delineating specific aide

responsibilities. Again, aides were wanting more input from the classroom teacher.

The fifth survey question was: *Do you believe this form could be improved? If so, how?* Again, all library aides expressed the need for a totally different observation/evaluation instrument formulated for them. This current evaluation form does not evaluate what they are responsible for.

Instructional aides believed that revisions to the current form were necessary. Again, input from the cooperating classroom teacher was a very important issue for them. Many believed that the classroom teacher should be the one doing the evaluating. Many also wanted modifications to the observation form to include evaluation of specific aide responsibilities both in and out of the classroom.

The sixth survey question was: *Do you think a self-evaluation and/or teacher observation of you should be included?* This question was relevant for both library and instructional aides. Although the job of a library aide is different from an instructional aide, the library aide performs her responsibilities in the presence of a classroom teacher, as does an instructional aide. All instructional and library aides surveyed wanted an observation by the classroom teacher to be included as part of the evaluation. Instructional aides working in several classrooms wanted input from each cooperating teacher. They believed that the teacher should have major input in the observation/evaluation process.

Instructional and library aides expressed concern over the fact that they have no tenure or seniority in the district. Instructional aides are offered contracts annually as student need (IEP) dictates. Library aides also work on an annual basis. With the

possibility of a declining need looming overhead, this single observation/evaluation report takes on a special meaning. Understandably, aides want most of the evaluation completed by the classroom teachers they work with daily.

The second part of that same question addressed the idea of including a self-evaluation. Of the seventeen instructional and/or library aides, eight believed that a self-evaluation section could be a valuable segment of the evaluation tool. Their feeling was that personal reflection upon growth and improvement was an important component. They all, however, stressed that this should be just one component of the evaluation assessment. With each contract being reviewed annually, the cooperating teacher evaluation component was felt to be the most important.

The seventh and final survey question was: *Do you have any other comments for improvement?* A recurring response to this question, was to ensure unity in the district's observation/evaluation of aides. As was noted earlier, not all aides were observed. If an aide is in fact to be observed, aides want to be certain that this does happen in each of the five school buildings in the district. If an aide is to be observed in a classroom setting, then uniformity of this policy must be enforced.

Another noteworthy comment for improvement was for the aide to sit down with the cooperating classroom teacher at the beginning of the school year to discuss goals and expectations. Aides are frequently put in new positions or new classrooms each year. Although the job description should be general enough to encompass all aspects of the job, it would be helpful to sit down with the classroom teacher to review the specifics.

On the back of the survey, each aide had the opportunity to explain or outline a typical day. It was desired that each aide explain their duties and responsibilities throughout the school day. Interviews with instructional aides provided elaboration for better understanding of survey responses.

What Did the Information Mean

The information gathered was very important for the project. Through the survey and interviews with the twelve instructional aides and five library aides, it became very apparent that library aides needed to be a totally separate entity with a completely different evaluation/observation tool. The responsibilities of a library aide are different from the responsibilities of an instructional aide. Although two of the library aides had been evaluated using the existing form, many of the descriptors listed had nothing to do with the job they do. For purposes of this project, time was spent evaluating the observation form as used for an instructional aide.

In reviewing the responses to the survey, it was determined that there was a need to devise a new evaluation/observation instrument for instructional aides and to indeed ensure the consistency of evaluations. A number of the descriptors were found to be not relevant to the job of an instructional aide. This has contributed to some confusion. Conversely, the evaluation instrument did not accurately reflect the responsibilities of an instructional aide.

As a result of this discovery, the job description was reviewed as a starting point. It was found to the surprise of the intern that there was a job description for a Kindergarten aide, classroom aide, special education aide, and a separate job description

for a special education aide at the middle or high school. The fact that there are so many job descriptions for the same basic job adds to the confusion. The job description is an essential personnel management tool. It is important to maintain up-to-date job descriptions for all school district personnel to clarify employees' duties and responsibilities as well as to set standards for supervision and performance appraisal. For this reason, there was a need to rewrite the job description for an instructional aide that would be all inclusive.

From this newly developed job description, a new instructional aide evaluation/observation instrument was devised. Each job responsibility listed on the instructional aide job description correlated to a descriptor on the evaluation/observation instrument. This provided clarity for all aides in understanding each delineated responsibility and how it was to be evaluated.

The survey also pointed out the need for an inservicing of all instructional aides to ensure mutual understanding of all job responsibilities. Jobs tend to change over time, and job descriptions need to be periodically reviewed to reflect those changes as well as revised performance responsibilities.

Of equal importance was the need discovered for an inservicing of all administrators who will be doing the evaluating of instructional aides. Administrators need to understand the job responsibilities of the aide and evaluate him or her annually. Consistency would be an impossibility if everyone was not in fact working from the same job description and being evaluated accordingly. Since aides do not receive tenure or seniority in this position, the aide evaluation takes on a significant meaning.

Consistency in the job description and evaluation of instructional aides will be important. This will tend to foster a feeling of importance for aides and the job they do. Knowing job expectations will show instructional aides the value of their job and encourage them to meet standards, thereby enhancing classroom instruction.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Implications, and Further Study

Conclusions and Implications

Through the use of the instructional aide survey as well as interviews with all instructional and library aides, it was concluded that the job description and evaluation form needed to be revised. Job descriptions and evaluation forms were obtained from the neighboring districts of Deptford, Mantua, Washington Township, Woodbury, Clearview, and Glassboro. Discussions were also held with teachers in addition to instructional aides, in an attempt to delineate specific duties necessary for an instructional aide.

The final adopted job description added a new qualification. Besides demonstrating a sincere desire and ability to work with and supervise groups of special education students under the direction of the classroom teacher and possessing good moral character, preference will now be given to candidates who qualify for a New Jersey substitute certificate. This not only allows candidates of a teacher education program an opportunity to seek employment in an educational field during a time when teaching jobs are not abundant, but also will enhance instruction in our school district. It would be beneficial to the classified student and yet not cost prohibitive to the district to have two certified teachers in the classroom working with students. Prior to this, an instructional aide only needed to possess a high school diploma or GED.

Performance responsibilities listed on the job description were included in the

newly revised listing. Additions included less clerical responsibilities and more reinforcing of learning and materials introduced by the classroom teacher. Instructional aides will enhance instruction by guiding independent study, enrichment work, remedial work, and reinforcement as assigned by the classroom teacher. These additional responsibilities for aides will have far reaching implications. No longer will an aide be viewed as an assistant to handle clerical duties, but rather a colleague to assist with instruction.

Another important addition to the job description of instructional aides is the delineation of the expectation of a high level of ethical behavior and confidentiality of information. The implication is that aides, as well as fully licensed teachers, will understand the level of confidentiality required when dealing with a classified student's IEP.

The revised instructional aide evaluation form has several important changes. Previously, aides were evaluated in areas not mentioned in the job description. This created confusion regarding the job expected of aides. For each responsibility listed on the new job description, there is a corresponding evaluative statement on the observation form. The implication here is that an aide can clearly see on the job description exactly what his/her responsibilities are and then be evaluated in a classroom setting for each task. A specific listing of responsibilities and evaluation of same, clearly establishes the importance of an effective instructional aide in enhancing instruction.

Another important change on the observation form is the ratings for the evaluation

of each descriptor. The previous form had ratings of strength, adequate, or weakness. The new instructional aide evaluation form has ratings of excellent, satisfactory, needs improvement, unsatisfactory, and not applicable. Each rating is described at the top of the evaluation form. The implication here is that each aide will have a better idea as to areas of excellence and areas where improvement is needed. This too would ultimately improve classroom instruction.

Another improvement in the observation form is the addition of a narrative section for commendations and recommendations. This will permit the supervisor to expound upon areas of strength and offer possible recommendations for areas that are unsatisfactory or in need of improvement. The implication here is that the supervisor would have the opportunity to improve classroom instruction by offering suggestions for change in areas needing improvement.

An important change for instructional aides is the inclusion of the statement, *"Teacher has been consulted."* Instructional aides wanted input from the classroom teacher with whom they work daily. The originally submitted evaluation form had a section for classroom teacher comments. Although administrators would not allow that section to remain a part of the evaluation form, a compromise was reached to be able to include the above mentioned statement.

In its final form, the job description and evaluation form for instructional aides has met with approval. After making necessary modifications as a result of meetings with administrators and instructional aides, both groups believe the new forms to be an

improvement over what was previously used. These new forms have been approved by the school board at a regularly scheduled meeting.

Leadership Development

This project has enhanced the intern's leadership qualities. In conducting meetings with instructional aides, the intern needed to conduct an orderly meeting where information could be gathered regarding the job of an aide. It is important for an administrator to create an atmosphere of trust in order to elicit responses at a meeting organized for a specific purpose. The intern also effectively analyzed information gathered. These are important leadership skills.

The intern also demonstrated leadership qualities in working with the administrators. At this meeting, it was important to hear their comments, understand the problem, and negotiate to reach a compromise that both parties could be happy with. It is important for administrators to possess these leadership qualities.

The final meeting with aides was yet another time for leadership skills. Instructional aides were not pleased to learn there would not be comments from the classroom teacher on the evaluation form. It was important for the intern to ensure that each aide understood and accepted the reasoning behind this. Careful explanation and the ensuing discussion was able to accomplish this.

Organizational Change

This project brought about positive organizational change. Prior to this, there were four different job descriptions with different titles for basically the same job. Now, there is only one job description and one evaluation form for all instructional aides

employed in the school district.

Instructional aides were also all inserviced as to their responsibilities and indicators for evaluation of their job performance. Knowing job expectations shows instructional aides the value of their job and encourages them to meet the standards. This will enhance classroom instruction.

Administrators were all also inserviced on each descriptor on the instructional aide evaluation form. Their understanding of this new observation form will assist in attaining uniformity in aide evaluations.

Further Study

The intern was part of one evaluation of an instructional aide and witnessed first-hand a positive correlation between job responsibilities as stated on the job description as well as the evaluation form and instructional aide classroom performance. It was clear to the intern that the aide knew exactly what her responsibilities were and made every effort to effectively carry out each task. As part of the post-evaluation conference, it was obvious that both the administrator and the instructional aide had a clear understanding of the job description and evaluation form.

The intern recommends further study to ensure that each administrator and instructional aide has as clear an understanding of the job description and evaluation form. A follow-up to ensure uniformity in evaluating is also very important. As stated earlier, instructional aides do not acquire tenure or seniority in this position. This adds a special significance to the evaluation and establishes uniformity as a must.

With ever-changing state requirements and mandates in public education,

especially in special education, it is important to revisit the job description on a regular basis to ensure relevancy. Had the current job description been re-evaluated regularly, perhaps there would not have been four job descriptions for the same job.

Through this project, the intern realized there is a need and recommended a rewriting of the job description for library aides as well as the drafting of an evaluation form specifically for them. Library aides have been evaluated using the same evaluation form used for instructional aides. This evaluation tool does not relate to the job they do. The library aide job description needs to be evaluated and rewritten to include computer related responsibilities. Each elementary library is now a media center/computer lab. The job description and evaluation tool must reflect this change.

An important change has occurred in the reworking of an instructional aide job description and evaluation instrument. Of equal importance is the inservicing that has taken place of all instructional aides and all administrators. Knowing job expectations has shown instructional aides the value of their job and encouraged them to meet the standards. This has enhanced classroom instruction. Understanding each descriptor has assisted administrators in achieving uniformity in observations. Continuing study is recommended to ensure maintenance of these standards.

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APPENDIX A: INSTRUCTIONAL AIDE SURVEY

INSTRUCTIONAL/LIBRARY AIDE SURVEY

Please answer all questions as completely as you can.

- 1. To the best of your knowledge, is the current observation form used annually in your building for all instructional and library aides?**
- 2. Are you observed in a classroom setting or is the observation form merely filled out and given to you to sign? Please explain.**
- 3. If you are formally observed, do you feel that would be more beneficial?**
- 4. In your opinion, is the current observation form a good representation of the work you do? Explain.**
- 5. Do you believe this form could be improved? If so, how?**
- 6. Do you think a self-evaluation and/or teacher observation of you should be included?**
- 7. Do you have any other comments for improvement?**

PLEASE COMPLETE OTHER SIDE.

THANKS FOR YOUR HELP!

Eileen Roberts

**PLEASE EXPLAIN OR OUTLINE A TYPICAL DAY FOR YOU
(time you start, what your duties or responsibilities are, who you
work with, what you do, where you work, etc. until the end of your
day.)**

APPENDIX B: CURRENT AIDE OBSERVATION FORM

PITMAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
PITMAN, NEW JERSEY

AIDE OBSERVATION REPORT

NAME: _____

EVALUATOR: _____ DATE: _____

TEACHER/CLASS: _____

CHARACTERISTICS:

		S	A	W
Patience/Self-Control	Demonstrates even temper; provides assistance to the needs of the child; Displays appropriate behaviors consistent with the district philosophy on behavior management and the treatment of children.			
Flexibility	Willingly accepts schedule change; recognizes and accepts situations that arise beyond the control of the teacher; cooperates, when requested by assisting in classrooms other than the one directly assigned.			
Teacher Interaction	Readily accepts teacher guidance and directions; communicates openly regarding feelings and ideas; relays all information regarding student to teacher; assists substitute in assuming classroom responsibility.			
Student Interaction	Relates impartially to the students and at an appropriate developmental level; demonstrates a caring attitude through physical, verbal, and body language behaviors.			
Confidentiality	Always maintains confidentiality of student and program issues, records, reports, etc.			
Policy	Consistent in maintaining the politics and procedures developed by the district Board of Education.			

Organization and Learning Environment	Adheres to schedule; follows directions, prepares materials as requested; assists special area teachers; performs lunch duty as needed; conducts instructional related activities as directed by teacher.			
Discipline	Follows through, consistently, with recommended behavior program for each student.			
Communication	Maintains appropriate communication with staff, students, parents and community.			
Attitude	Maintains and demonstrates a positive attitude towards job, is punctual and adjusts schedule (if needed).			
Attendance	Days Present_____Days Absent_____			

KEY: (S) *STRENGTH*
(A) *ADEQUATE*
(W) *WEAKNESS*

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

DATE:_____EMPLOYEE'S SIGNATURE _____

DATE:_____SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE _____

***APPENDIX C: REVISED INSTRUCTIONAL AIDE JOB
DESCRIPTION***

PITMAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
PITMAN, NJ

JOB DESCRIPTION

INSTRUCTIONAL AIDE

- Qualifications:
1. Demonstrates a sincere desire and ability to work with and supervise groups of regular education and/or special education pupils, under the direction of the teacher.
 2. Possesses good moral character as determined by reference checks, fingerprint review, and observations.
 3. Preference given to candidates who qualify for NJ substitute certificate.

Reports to: Classroom and/or Special Education Teacher
Building Principal
Director of Special Services (if applicable)

Job Goal: To work closely with individuals or small groups of regular education and/or special education pupils on a regular basis in an effort to provide them with the physical help and emotional support they need to gain the full benefit from the district's educational programs.

Performance

- Responsibilities:
1. Work with individuals and small groups of students to reinforce learning of material and skills initially introduced by the teacher.
 2. Assist teacher in the preparation of instructional materials and development of special strategies to reinforce material or skills based on students' individual needs, interests, and abilities.
 3. Guide independent study, enrichment work, remedial work, and computer reinforcement that is setup and assigned by the teacher.
 4. Assist students with physical needs as delineated in the students' I.E.P. and as directed by the teacher and/or under the supervision of the school nurse.
 5. Alert the teacher to any problems or special information about an individual student as well as assist in assessing accomplishments of students on a regular basis.
 6. Assist the teacher with daily routines which may include the following: general recordkeeping, monitoring student behavior, accompanying students during unsupervised situations, checking notebooks, maintaining student folders, and distributing and collecting materials.
 7. Assist in maintaining the decorum and organization of the classroom, lunchroom, and/or playground, clearly communicating behavioral expectations to students and working proactively to resolve conflicts.
 8. Serve as chief source of information and help to any substitute teacher assigned in the absence of the regular teacher.
 9. Maintain the same high level of ethical behavior and confidentiality of information about students as is expected of fully licensed teachers.

NOTE: The aforementioned duties and responsibilities are not to be construed as all inclusive.

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INSTRUCTIONAL AIDE

JOB DESCRIPTION

Terms of
Employment: Ten (10) months, with hours determined by need.

Evaluation: Performance of this job will be evaluated in accordance with State Statute, Rule, and Board Policy.

Approved:

***APPENDIX D: REVISED INSTRUCTIONAL AIDE
EVALUATION FORM***

INSTRUCTIONAL AIDE EVALUATION

Name: _____

Evaluator: _____ Date: _____

Teacher/Class: _____

- Excellent: To be used when performance significantly exceeds what is expected.
Satisfactory: To be used when performance meets the high standards established for the position.
Needs Improvement: To be used when performance needs improvement in a specified area.
Unsatisfactory: To be used when performance falls below the minimum standards required for the position.

	Excellent	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
Under the direction of the teacher, assists individual students and works with small groups of students in need of instructional reinforcement.					
Assists the teacher in devising special strategies for reinforcing material or skills based on an understanding of individual students, their needs, interests, and abilities.					
Guides independent study, enrichment work, and remedial work set up and assigned by the teacher.					
Works cooperatively and professionally with the classroom teacher.					
Assists teacher in checking notebooks, supervising assignments, helps in marking papers, and conducts skill reviews.					
Alerts the regular teacher to any problems or special information about an individual student.					
Gives all possible assistance and information to substitute teachers.					
Assists in maintaining the decorum and organization of the classroom, lunchroom, and/or playground by clearly communicating behavioral expectations to students and by working proactively to resolve conflicts.					
Willingly completes all assigned duties and responsibilities as requested by classroom teachers.					
Works enthusiastically to establish a positive, warm working relationship with students.					
Maintains the same high level of ethical behavior and confidentiality of information about students as is expected of fully licensed teachers.					
Performs other duties as assigned by the teacher and/or building principal.					

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INSTRUCTIONAL AIDE EVALUATION

COMMENDATIONS:

RECOMMENDATIONS:

_____ Teacher has been consulted.

Signature by the staff member indicates that he/she has reviewed this evaluation. It does not necessarily denote agreement with each rating.

Employee's Signature _____

Supervisor's Signature _____

Conference Date: _____

Biographical Data

Name	Eileen P. Roberts
Date and Place of Birth	January 7, 1951 Woodbury, New Jersey
High School	Pitman High School Pitman, New Jersey
Undergraduate Degree	Bachelor of Arts General Elementary Education Glassboro State College Glassboro, New Jersey
Graduate Degree	Master of Arts School Business Administration Rowan University Glassboro, New Jersey
Present Occupation	Communications Teacher - Grade Six Pitman Middle School Pitman, New Jersey